

The food pyramid that represented the healthy diet for almost 20 years now gives way to a food plate, and answers the question:

What should my plate look like at mealtime?

"My Plate" has four colored sections representing fruits, vegetables, grains and proteins. Next to the plate is a smaller circle representing dairy products.

Using the visual of My Plate, the USDA emphasizes several important nutrition messages: eat smaller portions, make at least half the plate fruits and vegetables and avoid sugary drinks.

Healthy snacks ideally contribute to our daily nutritional intake and when hunger strikes, having quick, accessible nutrient-dense foods makes making healthy choices easier. Consider having a bowl of washed and ready fruit on the table. Offering a plate of vegetables and low-fat dip or hummus as an appetizer before dinner encourages healthy snacking. Hard boiled eggs are a great source of protein and other nutrients, and keep for a week in the refrigerator.

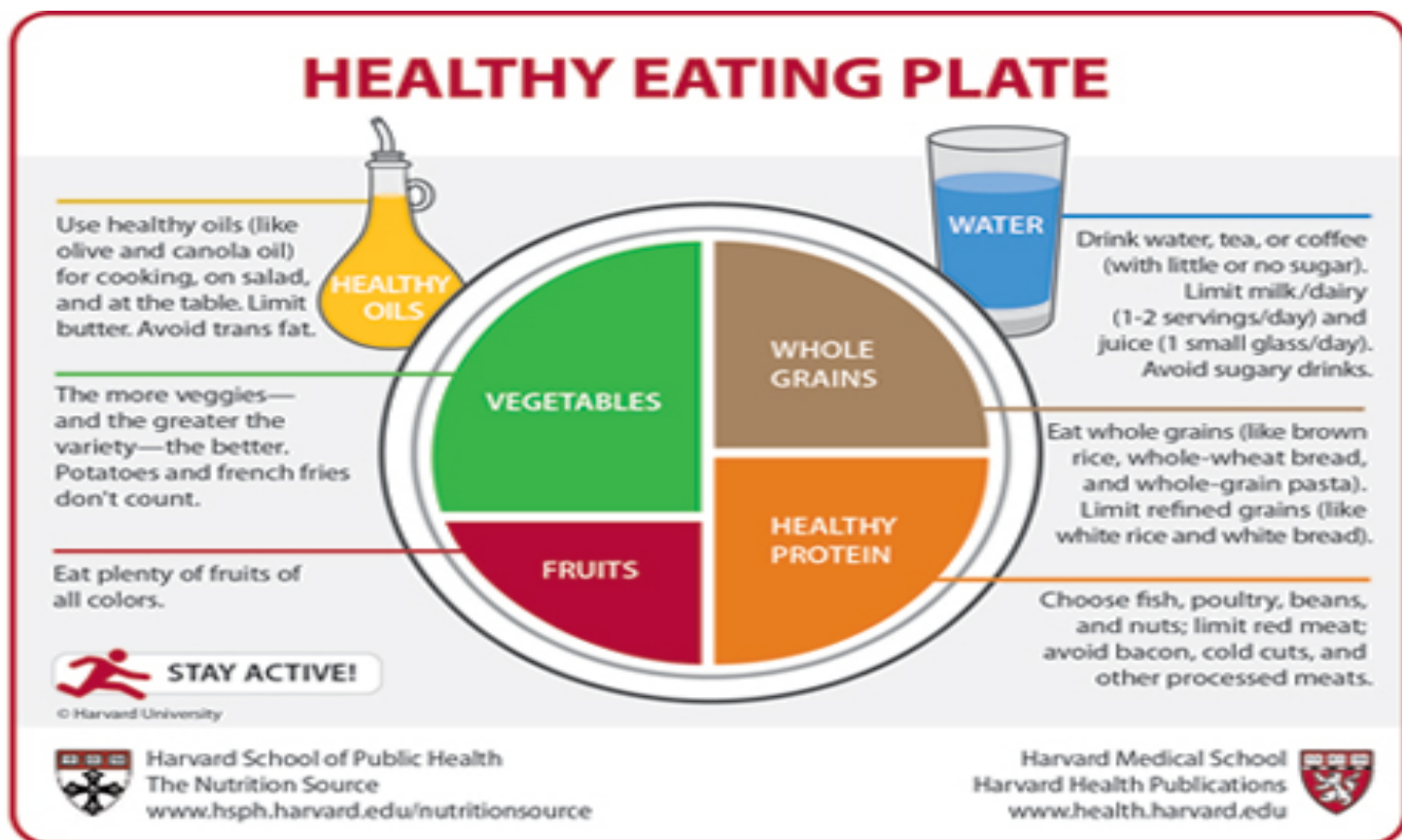
Healthy Meal Planning - www.mealsmatter.org : this site helps you establish a pattern of healthy meal each week, with menu planning, nutritional information, recipes and shopping lists.

Interactive Menu Planner - This interactive menu planner is designed to guide daily food and meal choices based on one day's calorie allowance. It may be used in advance to plan a meal, or at the end of a day to add up total calories, as well as fat, and carbohydrates consumed:

<http://hp2010.nhlbi.nih.gov/menuplanner/menu.cgi>

Harvard Medical School has a variation on the "Healthy Plate", focusing more on Vegetables rather than fruit and limiting dairy to 1-2 servings a day.

Read more on their recommendations here: <http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/>



Recipes from famous chefs are here:

<http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/recipes/home-cooking/index.html>

In the news:

Many researchers are advocating the Mediterranean diet to help boost brain function, to ward off Alzheimer's disease, or to slow the progression of Alzheimer's and other diseases. The Mediterranean diet includes a high intake of vegetables, legumes, fruits, whole grain cereals, fish, monounsaturated fatty acids; a low intake of saturated fatty acids, dairy products, meat and poultry; and a mild to moderate amount of alcohol. There are lots of articles and information about this, here is one website to consider:

www.healthcareinsights.net

Potatoes are a staple in hot school lunches, and now under fire! What do you think?

The USDA wants to limit potatoes in school lunch to make room for vegetables like broccoli—and the Harvard School of Public Health supports this plan: Potatoes have a similar effect on blood sugar as a can of soda, and in large amounts, raise obesity and diabetes risks.

According to studies, U.S. children, on average, only eat about 40 percent of the government's

daily recommended vegetable intake—and 29 percent of that comes from potatoes, most of them fried. Children are especially low in their intake of dark green vegetables, orange vegetables, and legumes (dried beans), getting less than 20 percent of the recommended intake.

Read more here:

<http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/nutrition-news/potato-and-school-lunch/index.html>

ABC's of packing a Power Lunch!

It's the start of new school year, and for many families, coming up with nutritious lunch box ideas that kids will actually eat is a daily challenge. And we have all been there: you barely have time to get your children out the door in the morning, nevermind orchestrate an appealing and nutritious lunch....

Lunch is an important meal; it fuels kids' bodies properly and keeps their energy levels up for the rest of the afternoon so they can learn and pay attention. Eating nutrient dense food is essential to growing brains and bodies. Kids can miss out on an assortment of vital nutrients by not finishing their lunch or not eating it at all. Kids and parents alike need to get back to the basics of eating more whole grains, vegetables, fruits, lean protein-rich foods and drinking more water.

Getting Started:

~Take your children to the grocery store to see what they find appealing and to begin

to establish a lunch "menu". Having a menu plan that the kids help create is half the battle! Kids as young as five can make lunches. If you put together lunches the night before they can be involved in the preparation, they are more likely to eat what is prepared, and bonus!: One less task in the morning!

~Pack enough food to ensure proper fuel for your child, but not so much that they get overwhelmed when they open their lunch box. A sandwich alone is not adequate for most children as it doesn't supply enough nutrients. Consider a box with separate compartments: Not only is it visually appealing, it provides space for a portions of a variety of items.



Other tips:

Pre-wash fruit and vegetables, and chop into portion sized pieces and store in the fridge.

Place food portions for meals in bags or containers ahead of time: things like crackers, fruits, cheese cubes.

Make lunch while you are making another meal, like breakfast in the morning or dinner the night before.

Use left-overs from the night before: pasta, chicken into chicken salad. And with a whole wheat tortilla, almost any veggie or meat can easily be turned into a roll up sandwich.

Want to read more?

<http://www.healthychild.com/healthy-school-lunches/making-lunch-make-it-nutritious-make-it-waste-free/>

Calculate your Daily Calorie Goal - <http://www.livestrong.com/thedailyplate/>

Calculators for Calories Burned and BMI - http://www.caloriesperhour.com/index_burn.php

Spark People helps people reach their health goals with fitness plans, calorie counters, exercise trackers and blogs - <http://www.sparkpeople.com>

Fitness Partner - helping people create a fit and healthy lifestyle - <http://www.primusweb.com/fitnesspartner/>

Quick Tips for Healthy Eating and Moving More - http://www.mass.gov/Eohhs2/docs/dph/commhealth/school/reduce_bmi_fact_sheet.pdf

http://www.weightwatchers.com/util/art/index_art.aspx?tabnum=1&art_id=78121

